

intended for his good. When these facts are properly evaluated, there remains no excuse for the fear and anxiety that afflict many Christians. It is the right of everyone who belongs to the true God to lean upon Him and to know that the only thing that keeps us from enjoying His very best is our own sin and our tendency to wander from His love.

Verse 2 also makes it clear that God gives His people no assurance that there will not be great difficulties ahead of them. It is God's desire that His people be molded and formed in accordance with His will, and this sometimes requires the fires of affliction. These fires may be the result of one's own sin; they may be a by-product of the sins of others; or they may simply be part of the situation in which the Lord has chosen to place one. Whatever the explanation of a particular tribulation or suffering, the believer can always know that he would not have the experience if it were not God's will. He should realize that it is God's intention to bring him blessing through whatever affliction he may have to endure, and to use it as a means of molding him into the sort of person God desires him to be.

The verse assures us that when we have to pass through tribulation we need never do so alone. God will be with us when we pass through the waters. He will not suffer us to be tested beyond what we are able to bear. The rivers will not overflow us. They may seem very high, but they will never pass over our heads. Deadly fire may be all around us, but it cannot permanently injure us except in such a way as may be part of God's will for our good. Any Christian would do well to memorize these two verses and apply them to his life, even though in the context their primary application is to Israel, whom God brought into being for a very important purpose - a purpose that is the subject of this whole section of Isaiah.

In verse 3 the LORD's definite relation to Israel is again stressed, and He calls Himself her Saviour. The term *Saviour* ^{^17} is applied specifically to Jesus Christ in the New Testament about sixteen times, and to God eight times. The corresponding Hebrew word ^{^18} occurs seventeen times in the Old Testament (though the King James Version renders it as "saviour")